



STATE OF RHODE ISLAND AND PROVIDENCE PLANTATIONS
HISTORICAL PRESERVATION & HERITAGE COMMISSION
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MINUTES

RHODE ISLAND HISTORICAL PRESERVATION & HERITAGE COMMISSION January 11, 2012

I. MEMBERS PRESENT

Mr. Robert E. Cusack
Mr. Robert Goff
Mr. John Grosvenor, AIA
Mr. Michael Hebert, NR Review Board
Mr. Karst Hoozeboom, Chairman
Dr. Patrick Malone
Dr. E. Pierre Morenon
Dr. Ronald Onorato
Mr. Pieter N. Roos
Dr. Patricia Rubertone
Edward F. Sanderson, State Historic Preservation Officer & Executive Director

STAFF PRESENT

Dr. Richard Greenwood, Deputy Director
Ms. Mercedes Monteiro, National Register Assistant - Heritage Aide

GUESTS

Edward Connors, National Register Consultant
Clark Schoettle, Providence Revolving Fund

MEMBERS ABSENT

Ms. Janet Coit, Director DEM
John P. Leyden, State Building Commissioner
Mr. Jared L. Rhodes, Chief of Statewide Planning representing Kevin Flynn, Asso. Dir
Mr. Keith Stokes, Executive Director, EDC
1 Vacant

II. AGENDA

1. Call to Order

The meeting was convened at 9:30 A.M. by Mr. Hoogeboom, Chairman.

2. Minutes of November 9, 2011

On a motion by Mr. Goff, seconded by Dr. Onorato, the Commission unanimously

VOTED to approve the Minutes of November 9, 2011.

3. Executive Director's Report

a) Mr. Sanderson reported federal legislation introduced by Senator Jack Reed to create a new Blackstone River Valley National Historical Park was removed from the FY 2012 Appropriations bill. The park legislation will now have to move through Congressional consideration on its own.

b) Mr. Sanderson reported on a recent meeting with Captain Doug Mikatarian, Commanding Officer at the Newport Navy Base, and Keith Stokes, Director of the RI Economic Development Corporation to discuss the Navy wind turbine proposal.

c) Mr. Sanderson reported on RIHPHC consideration of the historic status of a house at 23 Washington Street in Wickford Village, North Kingstown has been postponed at the request of the owner's attorney who was unable to attend today's meeting. The matter is rescheduled to the Commission's February 8, 2012 meeting.

d) Dr. Greenwood reported on the Lippitt Mill in West Warwick. The 1809 mill is one of the oldest cotton mills in the United States. The 1830 Mill No. 2 has been severely damaged by water, and manufacturing operations have been closed down. Although the 1809 mill is physically sound, the owner does not plan to resume manufacturing at the site and is considering demolition of all structures. The National Park Service will send photographer Jet Lowe to record Lippitt Mill. Dr. Greenwood is working with the owner and West Warwick Town Planner to consider preservation alternatives.

4. National Register of Historic Places

Preliminary Approval: Cowing & Heaton Mill, 1115 Douglas Avenue, Providence

Dr. Greenwood and National Register Consultant Edward Connors presented information about the Cowing & Heaton Mill. The Cowing and Heaton Mill is a two-story, predominantly rubble masonry factory building with a shallow pitched roof, its gable oriented toward Douglas Avenue. Attached to the rear is a brick, flat-roofed, early 20th-century brick addition. The mill is

sited on the east side of Douglas Avenue at the Providence/North Providence town line. Immediately across Douglas Avenue is the breached Geneva Dam, which formerly impounded the West River to create Geneva Pond, now a stream (passing to the immediate south of the building) with adjoining wetlands.

The front section of the building, as built in the mid-1840s, comprised a roughly 50' x 40, stuccoed masonry main block with a two-story wheelhouse sited at its southwest corner. This wheelhouse was part of a waterpower system that remained in use until the 1890s and was demolished by 1918. The current, shallow-pitched gable roof replaced the original roof of higher pitch after an 1861 fire. Most of the original stucco parging has fallen away over time. The rear, brick block was built in the 1920s after the Cowing and Heaton Mill had been absorbed into the operations of the Wanskuck Mill (Branch Avenue, Providence) in 1896.

The front half of this building is notable for its rough, rubble masonry, brick quoined corners and brick window enframing. Unlike common solid quoining, the Cowing and Heaton Mill presents predominant brick quoining with regularly-spaced square areas of exposed rubble. The structural function of this treatment is unknown at this time. Windows in the older block are wood-frame, segmental arch with 6/6 double-hung sash. In the rear, early 20th-century block, the windows are multi-light, steel-frame industrial windows with 8-light hoppers.

The Cowing and Heaton Mill is significant as a rare example of a small-scale, early- to mid-19th-century textile factory sited on its own water privilege, representing an important aspect of the wide range of industrialization in the City of Providence. By the mid-19th century, the factory system had matured in its ability to provide both large- and small-scale opportunities for industrial entrepreneurs. Cowing and Heaton, producing boot, shoe and corset lacing, exploited the relatively modest waterpower of the West River and represented small-scale textile entrepreneurship, a critical component of the larger textile economy. Until their demise or absorption into the larger, steam- and waterpowered complexes of the latter 19th century, these small factories often served as laboratories of innovation, as an entrée into the larger economy, or providers of niche services.

The Cowing and Heaton Mill is also a rare example of a modest-sized, early- to mid-19th century masonry factory building sited on a relatively small water privilege. After its incorporation into the larger Geneva complex and conversion to wool manufacture in the 1870s, the Cowing and Heaton Mill continued to operate under its own waterpower system, drawing from Geneva Pond while the neighboring Geneva Mill drew its water from a lengthy headrace below a storage pond ½-mile north of the complex (also on the West River). Despite a sizable rear brick addition by the Wanskuck Company in the early 20th century, the Cowing and Heaton Mill retains much of the physical scale, fabric and setting of a small-scale, mid-19th-century industrial operation.

Following discussion, on a motion by Dr. Onorato, seconded by Mr. Grosvenor, the Commission unanimously

VOTED preliminary approval for the proposed nomination.

5. Other business

There was no other business.

6. Next meeting date: Wednesday February 8, 2012.

7. Adjourn: The meeting adjourned at 11:10 A.M.

Minutes recorded by,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Edward F. Sanderson".

Edward F. Sanderson, Executive Director